

# Chapter 1

## THE MELODIC CONSIDERATIONS

For the purpose of the study of counterpoint, it is customary to use a **Cantus Firmus** (abbreviated "C.F.") - literally, a *fixed song* - against which the counterpoint (abbreviated "C.P.") is written. A stockpile of C.F.'s is given, for use by the student or teacher, at the end of this book. However, it is vital for the student to gain the ability to compose a good C.F. of his own. In so doing he will learn how to control the "shape" of his melodies, and a good "shape" is necessary for melody in any idiom.

For the purposes of this text, the C.F. will be in whole notes only. Consequently, the effectiveness of the C.F. must depend entirely on its shape. The directions which follow are aimed at aiding the student to gain control of melodic shape. They are guidelines only, and not infallible.

### GENERAL DIRECTIONS

1. The C.F. is to be anywhere from 8 to 16 bars in length.
2. It will usually begin and end on the tonic of the key, but could start or end on the mediant (3rd of the tonic chord).
3. All melodic leaps within an octave are allowed. Octave leaps should not be overdone, and should change direction immediately. Major and Minor 7th leaps generally be *resolved*, as:

The image shows two musical examples on a single staff. The first is labeled "MAJOR 7th" and shows a sequence of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The second is labeled "MINOR 7th" and shows a sequence: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3. Arrows indicate the resolution of the final interval.

Augmented and diminished leaps should be kept to a minimum. This is particularly true of augmented leaps which, in general, are less satisfactory than diminished leaps. The augmented leaps resolve outside of themselves, whereas the diminished leaps contain their own *reaction*. Here are some traditional resolutions:

The image shows a single staff with six musical examples. Each example is labeled with an interval and shows a resolution. 1. "AUG. 2nd": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 2. "AUG. 4th": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 3. "AUG. 5th": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 4. "DIM. 5th": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 5. "DIM. 7th": G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3. 6. "DIM. 4th": G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3. Arrows indicate the resolution of the final interval.

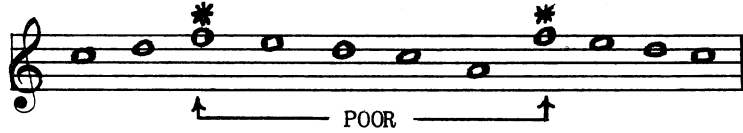
4. When two intervals - and sometimes three - in the same direction add up to a dissonant interval, it is generally desirable to resolve it, as:

The image shows a single staff with four musical examples. Each example is labeled with an interval and shows a resolution. 1. "MAJOR 7th": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 2. "AUG. 4th": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 3. "AUG. 4th": G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. 4. "MINOR 7th": G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3. Arrows indicate the resolution of the final interval.

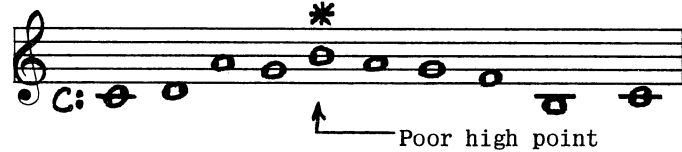
5. In general, don't proceed more than an octave in the same direction, as:



6. Avoid repeating the high point, as:

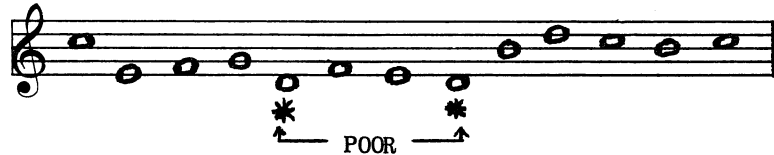


Avoid using a note with a pronounced upward tendency, such as the leading tone, for a high point, as:

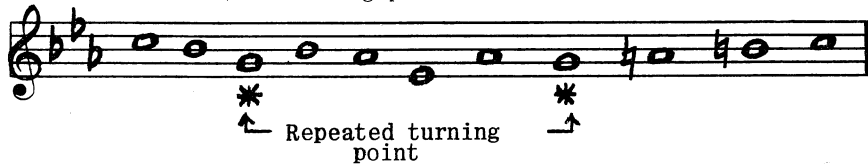


Notes with a clear downward tendency, such as the subdominant in major, the submediant or subtonic in minor, or "flatted" notes, make excellent high points.

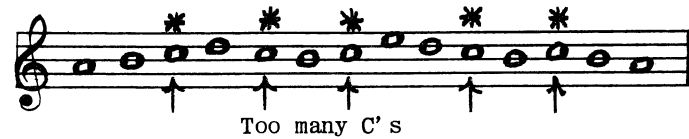
7. Avoid repeating the low point of the line. This is perhaps somewhat less serious than a repeated high point:



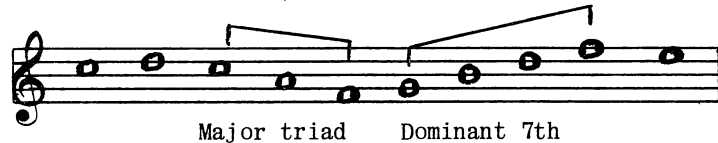
8. When possible, avoid repeated *turning points*, as:



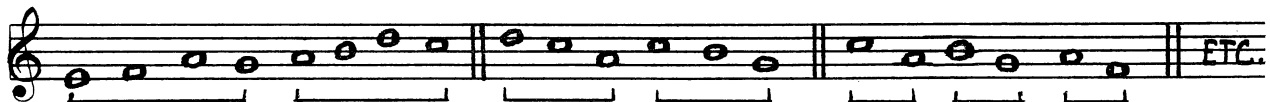
9. Avoid the over-use of any one note, as:



10. Avoid arpeggios of obvious "chords", or at least avoid over-using them:



11. Avoid repeated *patterns*, such as:



(For modification of this point, see text on *Contrapuntal Sequences* on Page 12.)